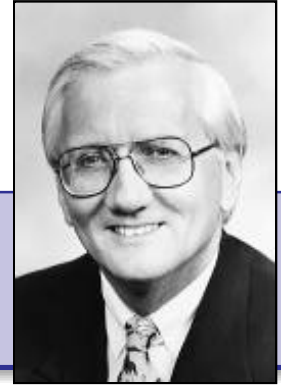




Rep. Kathy Lambert



45th District 1997 Session Report



Rep. Bill Backlund



Spring 1997

Dear friends,

This was truly a historic year in Olympia. After 105 days of hard work and long debates, lawmakers enacted two revolutionary reform measures that will change the course of welfare and juvenile justice forever in Washington. We negotiated an operating budget that is \$112 million below the Initiative 601 spending limit and slows the amount of growth in government by the widest margin since 1971. It was also the first time since 1957 the Legislature concluded its work on time in a budget-writing year. Given each of these sizeable accomplishments, we felt this session was definitely something to write home about.

That is not to say the 1997 legislative session was without challenges, for there were many along the way. Besides the budget, we set out to address other pressing issues, including transportation funding, public safety, and regulatory reform. The specifics of the budget and other important issues are outlined in this report.

Finally, we want to thank everyone who contacted us during the session. We need your ideas in order to represent you effectively in the Legislature. We hope you find this report informative and we welcome your responses. It is an honor serving the people of the 45th District.

Sincerely,

Kathy Lambert

Kathy Lambert
State Representative
Assist. Majority
Floor Leader

Bill Backlund

Bill Backlund
State Representative

Committees:
Appropriations
Law and Justice
Rules

Committees:
Health Care, *vice chair*
Transportation Policy and Budget
Rules

Protecting taxpayers, reshaping government and prioritizing education

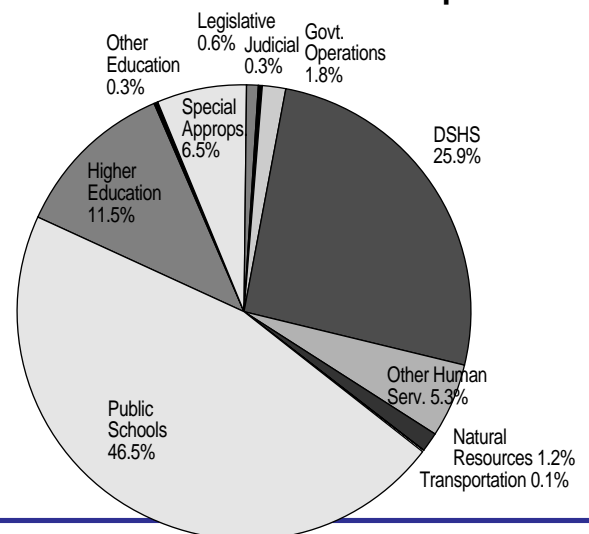
With total spending of \$19.07 billion over the next two years, the state operating budget adopted by the Legislature for the 1997-99 biennium keeps us under the I-601 limit and protects taxpayers by limiting the size and scope of government.

The budget represents an increase of 7.7 percent over the current level — the smallest growth in 26 years — and continues our successful efforts to make government more accountable and responsive to the individuals and families of Washington. And by keeping spending more than \$112 million below the limit established by Initiative 601, we ensure that the budget will be kept under control now and in the future.

Education is the first budget priority. Funding for K-12 education was enhanced \$288 million, including \$59 million in grants for technology and instructional materials.

We also increased access to higher education, boosting enrollments by nearly 6,400, continuing support for workforce training programs at the two-year colleges to serve up to 7,200 individuals, and increasing student financial aid to help students from low- and middle-income families.

1997-99 General Fund-State Expenditures



P.O. Box 40600 • Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Welfare reform requires personal responsibility

After 60 years of a welfare system that promoted dependency upon government, the 1997 Legislature adopted a historic new public assistance plan that will empower people to lift themselves out of despair, dependency and poverty and into self-sufficiency and economic independence.

This year's welfare reform plan represents a significant philosophical shift in how best to help those in need. Welfare will no longer be a one-way handout. Now, personal responsibility and accountability will be required of recipients. And, by focusing on job training and skill development, opportunity will also increase.

Public assistance will be temporary — limited to 60 months in one's lifetime — and, from the time they first apply, all able adults will be required to work or perform community service in exchange for benefits. All teen recipients will be required to live at home or in another state-approved setting and be actively progressing toward a high school degree.



Rep. Lambert testifies before the House Law and Justice Committee on HB 1403, requiring parental involvement in juvenile legal matters.

Protecting our communities from juvenile crime

This year, the Legislature approved a juvenile justice reform measure — the most significant changes in 20 years — that will make a real difference both in protecting the public and in reducing the number of teens who become repeat offenders. It especially targets the 6 percent of offenders who commit 50 percent of juvenile crimes.

Our reform plan begins on the first offense. Judges and prosecutors are given more options to combine punishment and/or rehabilitation, including jail time with longer sentences, boot camps, home detention, community service, or chemical dependency treatment alternatives.

Those who commit violent crimes such as drive-by shootings, first-degree robbery, first-degree child rape, or any crime involving a firearm will be prosecuted and sentenced as adults.

Additionally, juvenile records will no longer automatically be sealed at age 18 and legislation (HB 1403) Rep. Lambert introduced to require parental involvement also is included. This restores accountability to the system.

A bill Lambert introduced to implement statewide a program started by the Redmond Police Department to supervise and monitor criminals released in their community (HB 1781), was also funded in the budget.

Health care update

The Legislature introduced several important health-care bills this session. Some of the bills that won the Legislature's approval and await review by the governor include:

- **HB 1191** (*Backlund*, prime sponsor) establishes a process which any group seeking legislation to mandate new insurance benefits must use in order to provide lawmakers with the information necessary to make informed decisions about the request.
- **HB 1057** (*Backlund*) prevents information regarding a claim against a health-care provider from being released over the telephone until it is assessed and determined to merit investigation. Signed May 6.
- **HB 1850** establishes policies and procedures for long-term care facilities and processing complaints about service. This is an important measure for the protection of senior citizens and long-term care facilities.

Improving public schools

Strengthening education to make sure our children have the basic skills and knowledge they need to be successful was a high priority this year for the Legislature.

As an example, the state operating budget we adopted increases support for education and fully funds new school construction. We also ensured more resources are directed into the classroom to improve teaching and help students learn — nearly \$170 more per student.

In an effort to return to the fundamentals of basic education, we also adopted legislation to help schools do a better job of teaching reading in the earliest grades. And we also adopted legislation giving educators the tools and authority to maintain greater discipline in the classroom, as well as free local schools from unnecessary and excessive government regulations.

Finally, legislation to create an advanced college tuition payment program was approved. The program will allow parents to purchase tuition units now that would be redeemable for future tuition at any Washington college or university. For more information, contact the Higher Education Coordinating Board at (360) 753-7800.

Transportation: *Getting from Point A to Point B*

The Legislature approved a \$3.3 billion transportation budget that did not include an increase in the state's gas tax. It does, however, call for a performance audit of the Department of Transportation, the State Patrol and the Department of Licensing. A performance audit will closely scrutinize spending and determine where efficiencies can be made.

As a member of the House Transportation Policy and Budget Committee, Rep. Backlund took part in an extensive analysis of this year's budget that produced \$200 million in savings to taxpayers. He also worked to ensure \$1.5 million to conduct an audit of the DOT and its agencies, which will result in additional savings and efficiencies to the people of this state.

In addition, he was involved in securing \$1.25 million this year for a study of the State Route 520 corridor. SR 520 is a major transportation arterial used by thousands of commuters every day. The study will help identify areas of concern for commuters and engineers alike.

Finally, the transportation committee was able to get some additional funding by transferring from the general fund — about \$100 million collected from the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax — for new highway improvement projects to address freight mobility and economic development concerns. Road repair projects, including pothole patchwork, is fully funded in this budget.



Rep. Backlund confers with Rep. Phil Dyer, chairman of the House Health Care Committee.

Promoting efficiency in government

House Republicans focused their regulatory reform efforts on limiting the rule-making authority of agencies and dealing with rules already in place. This year's major regulatory reform bill, HB 1032, requires agencies to review existing rules within seven years of adoption or they are eliminated. HB 1032 is now before the governor.

In 1996, the Legislature enacted HB 2222, a bill Rep. Backlund prime sponsored, implementing performance audits. This year, he sponsored a follow-up measure, HB 1190, requiring agencies or local governments that have undergone performance audits to produce a preliminary report on their compliance with the final audit findings. HB 1190 has been sent to the governor.

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Rep. Bill Backlund

Seahawks' stadium set for public vote this June

Next month, voters will have a chance to approve or reject plans to build a new football stadium for the Seattle Seahawks. The construction of a new stadium and exhibition center is projected to cost \$425 million and would be financed through a combination of state, local and private sources. This session, the Legislature approved the referendum on the plan — provided the Seahawks pay for the full cost of the special election.

There was an onslaught of calls, e-mails and letters requesting to vote on the stadium issue. We thought you should know some facts on the proposal:

- The construction cost of the new stadium and exhibition center is projected at \$425 million, financed through a combination of state, local and private sources.
- The \$300 million in bonds would be due over 20 years.

- Paul Allen will be contributing \$50 million this July, which will later be offset by the sale of naming rights.
- The estimated revenue loss to the state general fund for the 1997-99 biennium is over \$6 million and \$10 million for the 1999-01 biennium.

The voters pamphlet will be an especially good source of information. Voters statewide will have the chance to approve or reject the plans June 17.

TOWN HALLS!

Your state representatives Kathy Lambert and Bill Backlund invite you to attend

45th District Town Hall Meetings

Tuesday, May 27

Duvall Library
122 Main St. NW

7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 31

Kirkland Library
406 Kirkland Ave.

10 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

Woodinville Library
17105 Avondale Rd. NE

1 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Thursday, June 5

Redmond Library
15810 NE 85th

7 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

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